?: Gulick E-S (1952) 1955 ME: Lebanon ME:

In some households religious pictures are in evidence, while in others there are none at all. In some families there are formal religious observances for the group. In others there may be none, or family members may be individually given to silent prayer. However varied the pattern may be, qualitatively it is one which allows for the action of individual choice and conscience.

There is definite evidence that village opinion concerning the efficacy of resort to the saint's shrines is sharply divided, and there is good reason to conclude that this multivocality is of recent development, a part of the acculturation process. Saint's shrines are very common in the Middle East. They are used by Moslems and Christians alike, and in many cases they probably stem from pagan prototypes. Among the Lebanese Christians, shrines are visited by the faithful primarily in the fulfillment of vows mostly made in connection with the curing of disease, the inducement of conception, the determination of the sex of an unborn child, and so on—in other words, the emphasis is on medical problems. The visitor may perform the ritual for his own sake or on behalf of someone else.

In Munqid, the shrine ritual consists of prayers—sometimes written on the walls—and the offering of candles or olive oil which are burned in the shrine. One informant also suggested a penitential element—walking to the shrine barefoot or crawling to it on hands and knees. The shrines are located at some distance from each other and from the house cluster, and a person is not likely to go near them except with deliberate intent and effort. Presumably the effort is not made except by those who believe in what they are doing.

There definitely are such individuals in the village. On one occasion the writer saw two persons make offerings of candles at one of the shrines ("because someone is sick," an informant explained); fresh paper candle wrappings were observed in the vicinity of all the shrines, and there were bottles for olive oil in all of them.

In contrast, there were the statements of several informants, none of whom was in the habit of using the shrines. One said (before the subject had really been investigated) that the shrines were no longer used at all. Another, more specifically, denied any personal belief in the help which the saints were supposed to give the sick and went on to express the opinion that no one else in the village believed in it either. When this informant was faced with undeniable evidence to the contrary, the general claim was modified, but the basic attitude had been revealed. A third informant stated flatly that some believed and some did not, and that among the former there were those who even had dreams about being visited by saints checking up on the fulfillment of vows. But this informant added the opinion that though some people were believers, they might very likely deny it if they were asked because they had heard that such beliefs were a mark of ignorance. Ignorance of what? it might well have been asked. Presumably, ignorance of, and lack of faith in, modern medical practices which, to be sure, do not eliminate all

"catches" the feast. For example, the Feast of Elijah, Mor Ilyous, (July 20) passed without much remark. It was said that many people often went on this day to Bekfaia of whose church Mor Ilyous is the patron saint, but this activity was not observed. At Ghazzeun, there is a man who every year summons the priest to help him "catch" the Feast of the Forty Martyrs (*'id al-arba'in shuhada'*), March 9. It may be that all twenty of the Church's feast days are given special recognition in al-Qurnā, if not in each of its individual villages.

The most important part of the religious year is unquestionably Easter, "the Great Feast" (*'id al-kabir*), preceded by Lent which is the longest of the numerous fast periods enjoined by the Church. Orthodoxy forty forbid the eating of meat, eggs, cheese, and milk. Lent is preceded by a week (*marfa'*) during which meat is eaten every day, which is not the ordinary practice. The Thursday of *marfa'* is known as *al-khamīs as-sakin*—"Drunkard Thursday." On this day rigid abstinence is expected and excused.

The first week in Lent, following *marfa'*, is *fini'a al-hejmal*, "the week of whiteness." Eating meat is strictly forbidden. Only "white" things—eggs, laban, and cheese are supposed to be eaten. The following week, these *and* meat are forbidden until Easter. Until Easter, no one is supposed to eat breakfast; many abstain from coffee and from drinking water in the morning. It was stated, however, that many people do not adhere absolutely to fast regulations, and there is considerable variation in this aspect of religious behavior.

On Palm Sunday (*ahd-shu'aine*) palm fronds are prepared by the head of every household in which there is a child under seven years of age. Once a little child has had this done for him, it is not done for him again. The fronds are hung with colors and candles, and placed in the middle of the church. After mass, the people go outside with the fronds and gather around the priest for a further blessing. Then everyone rushes on the fronds and pulls off all the outsides. Between Palm Sunday and Good Friday there are evening prayers every day in the church.

On Good Friday (*al-jimaat al-mucaddi*) everyone goes to church, even those who are in mourning, since it is a sad occasion. Mourners do not ordinarily go to regular mass nor to mass on Easter. It was said that even mourners of a year's standing or more may not go to mass at all—except on Good Friday. If there is no priest in any of the other Qurnā villages, the people there come to Mansūl for the service.

The Good Friday mass was attended by at least four hundred persons. It is featured by the placing of a table (*mawā'id*) in the center of the church. This is used at ordinary funerals for holding the coffin. Each house prepares a crown of flowers and candles which is placed on the *mawā'id*. Towards the end of the mass, the *mawā'id* is held aloft by four to six tall men near the door. All the people pass underneath it, out the door, and enter through the second door again.

On Easter eve of the year of this study, a special party for the adolescents